

# PLAIN TALKS

May 1992

Volume 71 Number 4

**Mule power!**





# PLAIN TALKS

May 1992 Volume 71 Number 5



## About the cover

A mule patrol takes to the trail on a GSU right-of-way in the Western Division. Mules help inspectors go where vehicles cannot. For more information, see pages 6-7. Photo by Steve White.



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# New group keeps GSU on the road



*Donald Lawrence, car pool foreman, runs a computerized engine analysis test on a GSU fleet vehicle.*

story and photos by Susan Gilley

It takes more than electricity flowing through the power lines to keep GSU in business. Traffic flow—made up of line trucks, mail vans, meter readers' trucks and other company vehicles—is also essential to the smooth operation of the company.

Earlier this year, the company consolidated transportation responsibilities into a single organization headed by Mike Yennie, manager of fleet administration. "We have about 100 employees throughout the GSU system who handle the transportation requirements of our business. Transportation plays an important role in rendering good service to our customers, as evidenced by our \$13 million budget for 1992," Yennie explained.

Yennie added that the new group is aiming to achieve equity throughout the company in facilities, people and tools and equipment, as well as continuing the many good programs initiated by GSUers Charles Glass, Bill Richard and Dewey Lytle.



*Mike Yennie inspects a new arrival in the parking garage at Edison Plaza.*

Because of the company's cash crunch, GSU halted purchasing of new automobiles for a number of years. Consequently, "The vehicles we had needed a lot of maintenance. About two years ago, we embarked on a program to upgrade our fleet and put together

maintenance guidelines," Yennie continued.

Company officials say the new fleet seems to be giving employees who drive the spiffier vehicles a renewed sense of pride in their jobs. As the company's financial situation improves and money becomes available to improve the fleet, officials are discovering that maintenance technology has improved tremendously in just a few years.

"We've been able to acquire some new up-to-date engine analyzers and other equipment. We now need to make sure our people are properly trained in how to make use of the new technology," Yennie noted.

The vehicle inventory for the entire GSU system includes 362 cars and station wagons, 555 light trucks and vans and 534 line and service trucks for a total of 1,451. So far this year, the company has acquired 308 new vehicles in all categories. There are garages in all division headquarters, plus Orange, Huntsville, Jennings, Lafayette and River Bend. In addition, there is a system garage in Lake Charles for installing and overhauling hydraulic units on line equipment.



# Western Division, Neches Station earn President's Safety Award



*L to R, John Cole and Michael Gross represent Neches Station, the recipient of the President's Safety Award for 1991. Joseph Donnelly presented the award at a dinner banquet at the Beaumont Hilton.*

by Scott Harper

GSU Chairman and CEO Joseph L. Donnelly recently attended banquets honoring employees of Neches Station and Western Division to present the President's Safety Award for 1991. Western Division received the award for being the safest division at a banquet held at the Del Lago Resort in Conroe. At a banquet at the Beaumont Hilton, Neches Station was honored for being the safest plant.

Western Division completed 1991 without a single lost-time injury. In

January 1992, the division topped one million work hours without a lost-time injury. "That is truly a superior performance," Donnelly said at the award banquet.

In vehicle safety, division employees drove 3.5 million miles in 1991 with only five avoidable accidents for a ratio of 1.4 accidents per million miles, half

the corporate goal of less than 2.8 accidents per million miles driven.

"Employees in Western Division have a good outlook on safety," says Les Odom, substation mechanic-1st class, Conroe.

"We try to do it the safe way everyday. I'm glad to be a part of it," says Odom, a member of the Western Division Safety Awareness Committee.

"Western Division's continuing commitment to safety is demonstrated by the fact that this is the second year in a row you have won this award," Donnelly said. "I want to thank you for your achievement. The rest of the GSU family has cause to admire your performance."

Throughout 1991, employees at Neches Station accomplished their tasks without a single vehicle accident or bodily injury. "This constitutes a perfect record," Donnelly said at their dinner presentation. "You should be very proud of that accomplishment."

As of February, Neches Station employees accumulated more than 1.7 million work hours without a lost-time accident. "The last lost-time accident at Neches was on May 19, 1979. That is a tremendous record that has played a significant role in the success of our company safety program," Donnelly said.

"It makes the whole station very proud," says John Cole, power plant superintendent, Neches Station, about winning the award. "Our group has safety as a high priority and works together for a common goal."



*Les Odom (l) accepts the safety award for Western Division presented by Joseph Donnelly at the Del Lago Resort in Conroe.*



# NEWS BRIEFS

## Environmental project saves millions, wins EPRI award

Gulf States Utilities received industry recognition for putting old utility poles to good use. Since August 1989, thousands of the poles have been used in fencing and landscaping projects, as bulkheads for erosion control and to mark parking lots and road boundaries.

Dr. George Preston, vice president of the Electric Power Research Institute's Generation and Storage Division, presented an "Innovators" plaque to GSU's Jim Mutch, director of environmental affairs. The Palo Alto, Calif.-based institute gives the awards to companies that apply EPRI technology and research.

"As a direct result of EPRI research, GSU is able to make good use of something that might otherwise have cost the company millions of dollars for disposal," Mutch notes.

GSU removes poles after about 20 to 40 years of service when they begin rotting at the base. "Up to 30 feet remain in good condition, although that is too short for our requirements," Mutch explains.

In 1986, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed revisions to the Toxicity Characteristic regulation that would have viewed discarded treated wood poles as hazardous wastes. EPRI conducted several key laboratory experiments to evaluate the scientific aspects of the Toxicity

Scott Harper



L to R, David E. Derthick, EPRI, and Dr. George T. Preston, EPRI, present the award to GSU's Jim Mutch and Joseph Donnelly.

Characteristic Leaching Procedure proposed by EPA as the basis for limits on organic compounds commonly applied as pole preservatives. EPRI also examined an EPA groundwater model.

Ultimately, EPRI demonstrated that the proposed limits were too conservative and EPA approved less stringent final regulations. As a result, Mutch estimates that GSU will save about \$10 million for the period from 1990 through 1993 in avoided hazardous waste disposal costs. Mutch credits EPRI with about half of the estimated savings.

According to Mutch, GSU first offers a discarded pole to the landowner. If that person does not want it, then the company stores it for later reuse at the appropriate GSU service center, including those in Beaumont, Vidor, Silsbee, Port Arthur and Orange.

Reg Jones



1991 was a good safety year for Willow Glen Station with its best performance ever. It has earned the distinction of being "The Safest GSU Power Plant in Louisiana." Left to right, plant workers Freddie Lodge, Richard Nesom and Jerry Kennedy proudly raise the safety flag.



Reddy Volunteers in Gonzales presented 124 Heritage Manor Nursing Home residents with fruit baskets and a bingo game with prizes. The residents were grateful for the baskets and companionship. Above, (l to r), Jenna Gautreau, Michele Darville, Ashley Darville, GSU's Carol Darville and resident Justin Ellison.



# Mules maneuver through tough right-of-way terrain

story by Scott Harper  
photos by Steve White

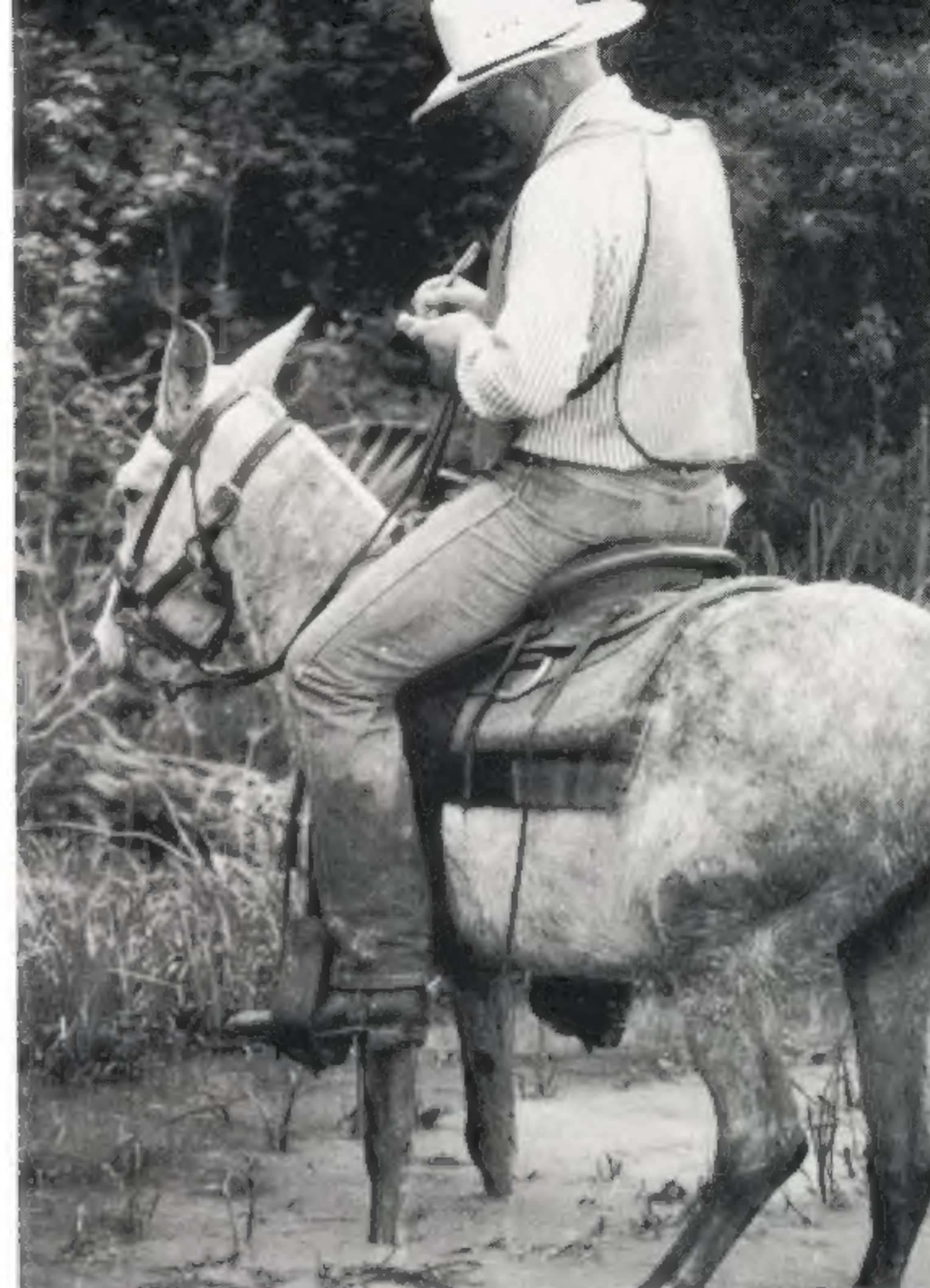
For years, people used horses and mules for work and recreation. With the invention of automotive technology, these animals were slowly replaced by trucks and other heavy equipment. However, in 1992, Western Division lived up to its name and reverted back to the "Old West" when it bypassed modern equipment and used mules to patrol rights-of-way.

"We had so much rain, our rights-of-way were soaked," says Steve White, supervisor-right-of-way maintenance and procurement, Conroe. "Our four-wheel trucks and ATV's couldn't get in to make inspections."

With the need for healthy transmission systems always crucial, White suggested patrolling the rights-of-way with horses. It was later decided to use mules instead because they can hold up for long distances.

"They were the only animal I knew that could get back in there," he says.

For five weeks, contractors patrolled the eastern side of Western Division's transmission lines with two mules. One rider would start on each side and ride as far as they could then swap sides and come back.



*Inspectors are able to observe and record conditions on the rights-of-way with the help of slow-paced mules.*



*A rider checks a tall tree for interfering limbs.*

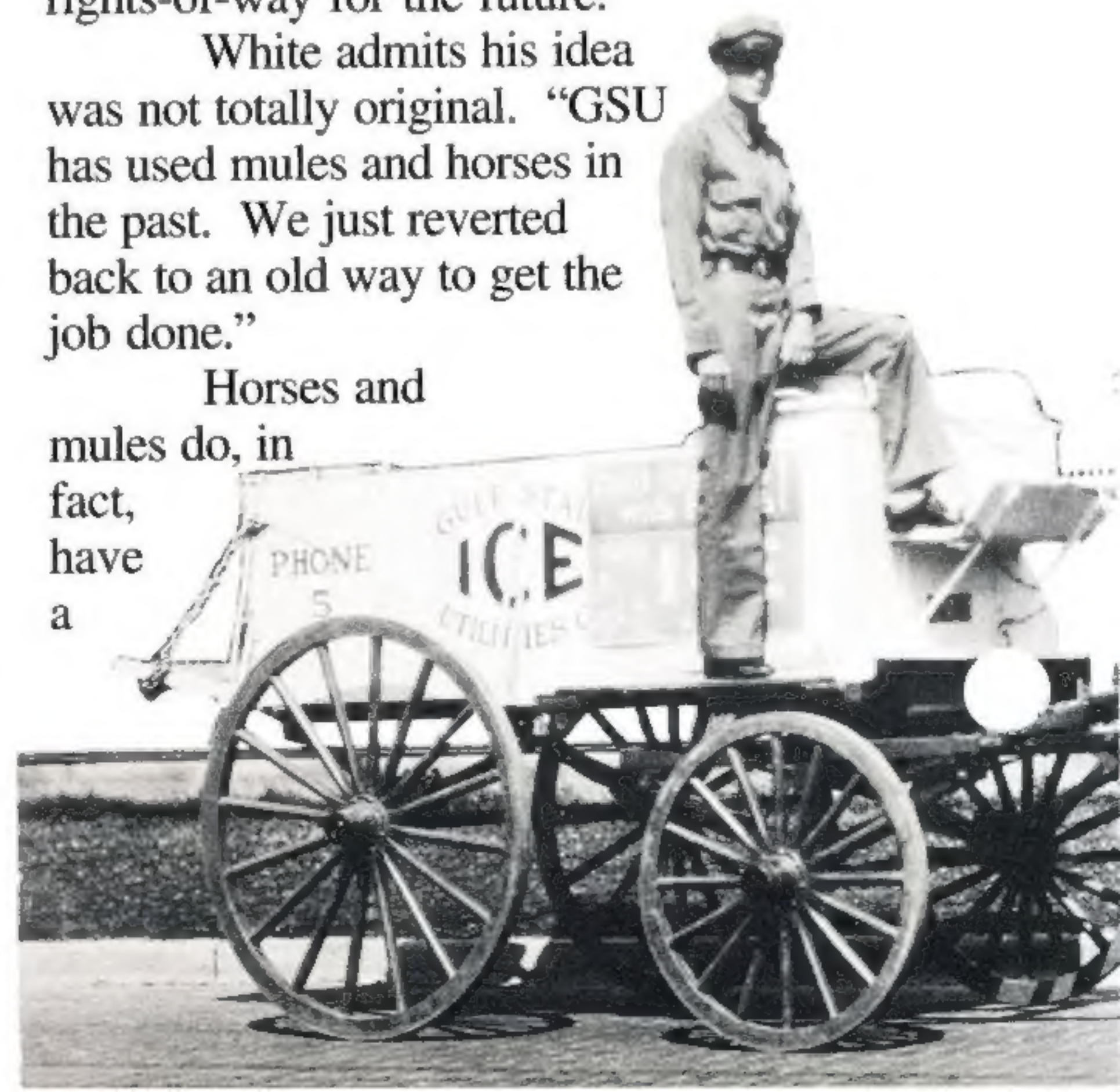
"They (riders) had the opportunity to see things you normally wouldn't from an airplane because of the slow pace of the mules," White says. "They were able to repair damaged fences and replace broken locks."

White says a lot of work was produced by the mule patrol. "They found broken insulators, woodpecker holes, burned poles, broken limbs and leaning green trees," he says.

"The results were more than I expected," White says. "We're looking right now to see if using the mules is a more cost effective way of patrolling rights-of-way for the future."

White admits his idea was not totally original. "GSU has used mules and horses in the past. We just reverted back to an old way to get the job done."

Horses and mules do, in fact, have a





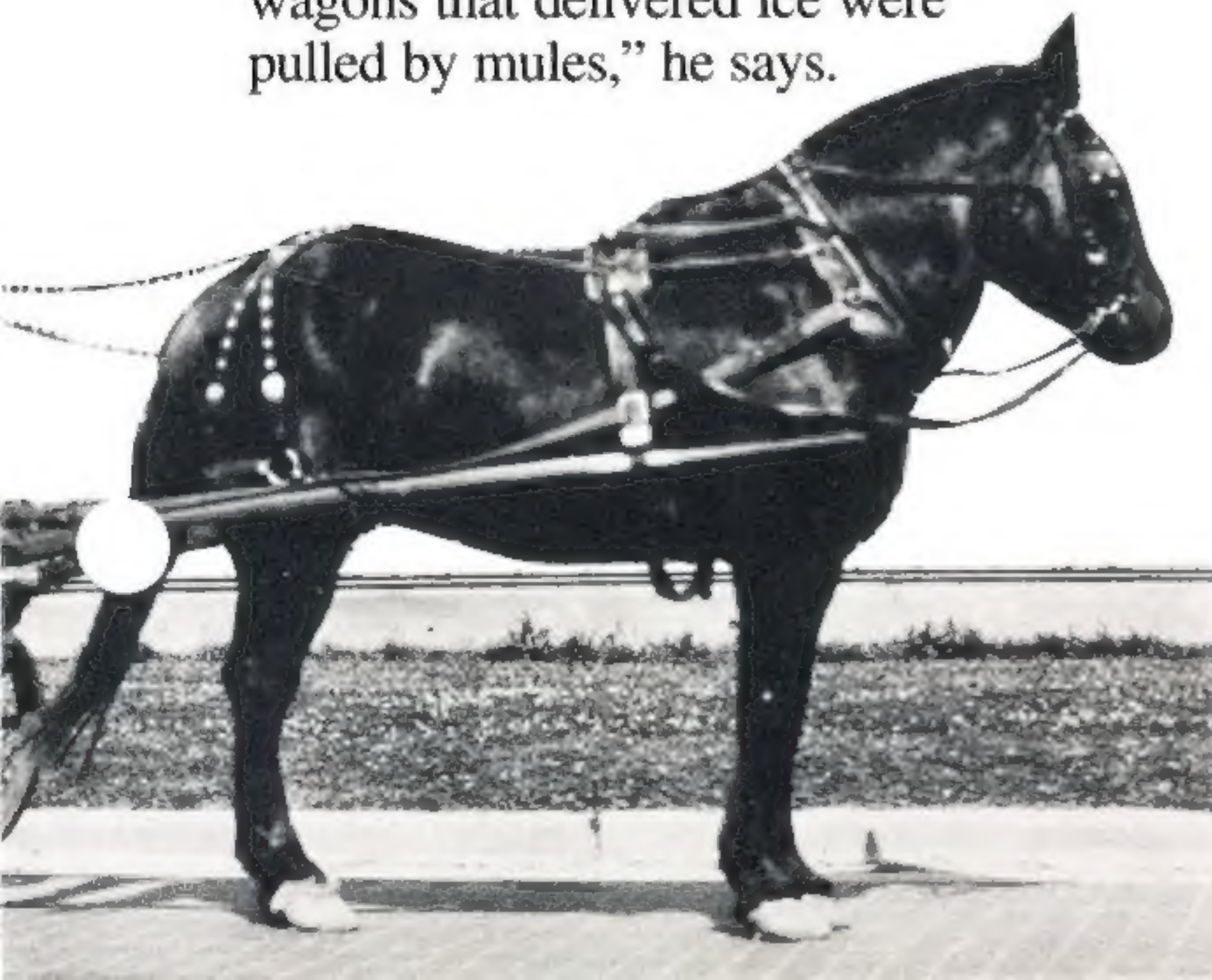


*Far left, tending to the sometimes stubborn pack-animals can be funny—or frustrating. Left, after a long day on the trail, the team relaxes. Above, packs on the mules are used to carry locks and other equipment for on-site repairs.*

place in Gulf States' history. Jerry Fryer, general line supervisor, The Woodlands, recalls stories he heard when he first came to work in 1952. "I heard talk about using mules in Navasota to pull long stretches of conductors (wire) through the woods. The lines were a mile long and they couldn't do it by hand," Fryer says.

According to Bill Richard, operations manager, Beaumont, mules were used to pull wagons and material and would also take crews out to do their work. "They were the primary means of transportation in the early days," he says.

Neal Carpenter, a Lake Charles retiree of 23 years, remembers horses and mules being used when GSU owned an ice company in Lake Charles. "The wagons that delivered ice were pulled by mules," he says.



A fellow Lake Charles retiree, Harvey Johnson, who retired in 1980, explains, "The larger wagons were pulled by mules. Smaller wagons were pulled by draft horses. The mules pulled wagons carrying 10 blocks of ice weighing 300 pounds each. The workers would chip and sell 10- to 100-pound blocks, depending on what kind of refrigerator the customer had, carry the ice into the house and place it in the refrigerator."

Johnson also recalls a wagon pulled by two mules that delivered materials and supplies back and forth between the downtown office and the T&D office.

Another animal, according to Johnson, came in handy during construction. "Six yoke of oxen were used to pull poles and line into the swamp areas. They were the only animal that could go in those swamps. They helped set poles by pulling on a block and tackle."

During the early 30s, the use of animals for company work was gradually replaced by trucks and cars.



# SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

*March*

# 1992

## 30 YEARS

**Clara S. Perino**  
Executive Department  
Beaumont  
**Irby J. Thibodeaux**  
General Services  
Beaumont  
**Elba G. Dodge**  
Executive Department  
Beaumont  
**Charles M. Decuir**  
Customer Service  
Conroe  
**John A. Landry**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Station  
**Kenneth W. Haynes**  
Electric T&D  
Beaumont

## 20 YEARS

**Edgar Fenner Jr.**  
Electric T&D  
Conroe  
**Vickie T. Albert**  
Plant Production  
Louisiana Station  
**Billie A. Schaefer**  
Human Resources  
Conroe

## 10 YEARS

**Sheila A. Anderson**  
Electric T&D  
Conroe  
**Charles S. Barnhill**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Catherine S. Hanson**  
Financial Services  
Beaumont  
**Kathy B. Holland**  
Division Accounting  
Beaumont  
**Janice M. Koenig**  
Customer Service  
Conroe

**Clifford J. Morris**  
Purchasing  
Beaumont  
**Barry C. Murchison**  
Division Accounting  
Port Arthur  
**Carl G. Taylor**  
Plant Production  
Willow Glen  
**Rhonda W. Walker**  
Corporate Services  
Beaumont  
**Earnest E. Williams**  
Electric T&D  
Beaumont  
**Warren H. Hebert Jr.**  
Electric T&D  
Lafayette  
**Gerard N. Kennedy**  
Plant Production  
Willow Glen  
**Chris A. Champagne**  
Engineering  
Beaumont  
**John O. Duriseau**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Jonathan S. Fontenot**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Station  
**Llewellyn Toussard**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Station  
**Jeffrey M. Vincent**  
Plant Production  
River Bend  
**Charlotte K. Viguet**  
Accounting Services  
Beaumont  
**Brenda M. Davis**  
Fleet Administration  
Beaumont  
**Linda B. Glaude**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**David R. Inwood**  
Design Engineering  
Beaumont  
**Walter G. Jones II**  
Bus Systems & Materials  
River Bend  
**Robert W. Merritt Jr.**  
Plant Production  
Sabine Station  
**Gary D. Noack**  
Electric T&D  
Dayton  
**Anthony J. Parrino**  
Electric T&D  
Baton Rouge

**Mark E. Philmon**  
General Services  
Beaumont  
**Debra W. Veillon**  
Rates & Regulatory Affairs  
Beaumont  
**Todd B. Dunkleberger**  
Internal Audits  
Beaumont  
**Jewel E. Merchant**  
Plant Production  
Sabine Station  
**Russell J. Thibodeaux**  
Plant Production  
Willow Glen  
**Peggy M. Helton**  
Division Accounting  
Conroe  
**Jeffrey B. Gully**  
Gas Department  
Baton Rouge  
**Roger D. McCurry**  
Electric T&D  
Vidor  
**Raymon D. Powell**  
Engineering  
Beaumont  
**Charles S. Richardson**  
Marketing  
Baton Rouge  
**Vickie H. Nelson**  
Division Accounting  
Conroe  
**Tommy L. Martin Jr.**  
Electric T&D  
Baton Rouge  
**Gregory D. Russell**  
Plant Production  
Willow Glen  
**Ronald P. Armistead**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**William M. Jones**  
Electric T&D  
Gonzales  
**Roger D. Mott**  
Plant Production  
Sabine Station  
**Guy L. Renfrow**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Robert M. Shingleur**  
Gas Department  
Baton Rouge  
**Roger L. Stout**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Timothy W. Wilkinson**  
Electric T&D  
Baton Rouge



# ON THE MOVE

## Promotions from March 1 - 31, 1992

**Armstrong, Allan S.**, Beaumont, to garage mechanic 1st class, Fleet Administration (3).

**Arnette, Luther M.**, Baton Rouge, to right-of-way representative, T & D-Engineering (23).

**Beauchamp, Russell L.**, River Bend, to control operating foreman, RBNG-Plant Operations (8).

**Bell, Jim W.**, Baton Rouge, to storeroom supervisor, T & D Storeroom (16).

**Blanchard, Larry A.**, Baton Rouge to substation mechanic 3rd class, Electric T & D (7).

**Block, Bryant K.**, Sabine Station, to repairman 3rd class, Plant Production (12).

**Bonnitt, Douglas B.**, Nelson Station, to repairman 2nd class, Plant Production (4).

**Braud, Alan D.**, Louisiana Station, to repairman 1st class, Plant Production (6 months).

**Bremer, Nellie F.**, Baton Rouge, to senior engineering assistant, Electric T & D (21).

**Broom, James E.**, Sabine Station, to control operations foreman, Plant Production (10).

**Buser, Stephen V.**, Beaumont, to economic development specialist, Marketing (4).

**Cain, James L.**, Lewis Creek, to test foreman, Plant Production (1).

**Costilla, Raymond, Jr.**, Port Arthur, to communication serviceman 1st class, Electric T & D (12).

**Crowder, Danny B.**, The Woodlands, to lineman 3rd class, Electric T & D (6 months).

**Dawson, Dale L.**, River Bend, to control operating foreman, RBNG-Plant Operations (8).

**Delatte, Valarie V.**, River Bend, to cost engineering specialist, RBNG-Business Systems (6).

**Dolney, Gerald M.**, River Bend, to senior technical specialist, RBNG-Plant Operations (1).

**Dugas, Brian G.**, Baton Rouge, to storekeeper, Electric T & D (10).

**Givens, Mark G.**, River Bend, to communications service-

man 1st class-nuclear, RBNG-Plant Production (2).

**Hardy, Thomas J.**, Beaumont, to chief power plant engineer, Engineering Services (10).

**Henning, Stephen B.**, Nelson Coal, to repairman 3rd class, Plant Production (3).

**Hillhouse, Michael M.**, Beaumont, to industrial power quality manager, Engineering and Technical Services (22).

**Hughes, Daniel E.**, Sabine Station, to mechanic helper, Plant Production (1).

**Huston, Gary H.**, River Bend, to control operating foreman, RGNG-Plant Operations (6).

**Jones, Cynthia N.**, River Bend, to repairman 1st class-nuclear, Plant Production (6).

**Jones, Paula W.**, Beaumont, to computer operator, Computer Applications (9).

**LaFosse, Patrick Q.**, Nelson Coal, to repairman 1st class, Plant Production (3).

**Leche, James M.**, Baton Rouge, to lineman 3rd class, Electric T & D (10).

**Leger, Joseph M.**, Baton Rouge, to engineering assistant, Electric T & D (10).

**Lockwood, James R.**, Beaumont, to communications serviceman 2nd class, Electric T & D (1).

**Louvier, David P.**, Beaumont, to financial analyst I, Strategic Planning-Financial Planning and Analysis (2).

**Manry, Jesse D.**, Baton Rouge, to senior engineering assistant, Electric T & D (13).

**McCormick, Murville C., Jr.**, Baton Rouge, to substation mechanic 3rd class, Electric T & D (7).

**McMilan, Iva D.**, Beaumont, to computer operations associate, Computer Applications (10).

**Mitchell, Douglas L.**, Baton Rouge to garage mechanic 3rd class, Fleet Administration (3).

**Montalvo, Manuel A.**, Sabine Station, to control operations foreman, Plant Production (6).

**Mott, Susan F.**, Sabine Station, to equipment operator, Plant Production (10).

**Musso, Donald J.**, Baton Rouge, to shop foreman, Fleet Administration (5).

**Peavy, Richard D., Jr.**, Baton Rouge, to apprentice-line and service departments, Electric T & D (3).

**Podraza, James, Conroe**, to transportation supervisor, Fleet Administration (7).

**Reeves, David M.**, Nelson Coal, to repairman 2nd class, Plant Production (7).

**Rodgers, Myrle L., Jr.**, Beaumont, to senior engineering assistant, Rates and Regulatory Affairs (9).

**Schott, Matthew J.**, Beaumont, to environmental analyst, Engineering (1).

**Sibley, Tony J.**, Baton Rouge, to draftsman, Gas Department (10).

**Spagnoletti, Mark D.**, The Woodlands, to lineman 3rd class, Electric T & D (3).

**Stephens, Nathan W.**, Sabine Station, to mechanic helper, Plant Production (11 months).

**Taylor, Joseph D.**, Baton Rouge, to lineman 3rd class, Electric T & D, 7.

**Toups, Paul A.**, Baton Rouge, to storekeeper, Electric T & D (8).

**Vincent, Chester J.**, Nelson Gas & Oil, to business administrator, Plant Production (11).

**Warner, Larry D.**, Sabine Station, to mechanical maintenance foreman, Plant Production (3).

**Weaver, Frank H.**, Beaumont, to system real estate supervisor, Engineering and Technical Services (33).

**Wells, Malcolm, Jr.**, Sabine Station, to repairman 1st class, Plant Production (10).

**Will, David E.**, Neches Station, to repairman 1st class, Plant Production (13).

**Young, Valerie C.**, Baton Rouge, to customer accounts analyst, Division Accounting (13).

( )denotes years of service



# MAILBOX



Mark Viguet



L to R, Jo Nell Barrett, Drew Wilson and Jill Street at the Edison Plaza Museum.

## Southern hospitality

"Both my wife and I thoroughly enjoyed our days in the Beaumont area," writes Edison impersonator Drew Wilson, Mission Viejo, Calif. "Everyone we met gave us a good sampling of southern hospitality.

"The efficiency with which the school visits and the other events were handled made my part easy. There are so many people to whom I owe thanks, but I wanted to take this opportunity to give special praise to **Jill Street**. This charming young lady spent months working out details for our visit and she deserves our gratitude and admiration.

"I am equally impressed with the fine job she has done in making the Edison Plaza Museum alive with the presence of the 'original' Thomas Edison."

Street is museum curator in Beaumont.

## Exceptional employees

**Ed Hegwood**, supervisor-contract crews, Beaumont, received this thank you letter from Hillister customer Mrs. Charles A. Roberts:

"I just wanted to take this opportunity to show my appreciation and thanks to a very nice and courteous GSU employee, **Lynn Falcon**.

"As I was traveling to work I noticed our collie dog who had been stolen from our home...He was attempting to find his way back home. I began attempting to get the dog to follow me back to our house but after a while the dog quit following.

"Lynn was traveling by and offered to take the dog to my house in the back of his truck...I found Lynn to be a very polite and caring person. It is nice to know that GSU has such exceptional employees."

Falcon is inspector-tree trimming located in Beaumont.

## Alive and well

**Harriet Miller**, marketing supervisor, Baton Rouge, sent the following memo to **Alvin Dragg**, superintendent-Gonzales; **Ken Sandberg**, manager-division operations, Baton Rouge; and **Doug Watkins**, division vice president-Baton Rouge:

"GSU customer service is definitely alive and well in the Gonzales District—from retired as well as current servicemen.

"Paul and I have had an electrical problem in an outside building with a separate GSU line servicing it for almost a year. Several attempts by two Sears service people and one electrician neglected to solve the problem.

"A casual conversation...with a retired employee, **Corbin 'Bean' Gautreaux**, brought immediate results. 'Bean' suspected what the problem was from Paul's description... He voluntarily came by, diagnosed the problem...and called the serviceman on call in the area. **Roger Forte** promptly came and corrected the situation.

"Paul and I think 'Bean' and Roger deserve thanks and commendation for a prompt job well done."

Forte is serviceman-1st class, Gonzales.

## Responsive actions

**Dick Landry**, supervisor-industrial services, Conroe, received this letter from Ted Cormier, plant manager, Texaco Chemical Plant, Conroe:

"I would like to...express my appreciation for your support and responsive actions during the pipeline fire at our facility...Your cooperation in helping to restore service as quickly as possible after the fire was extinguished was a true effort of team work and dedication.

## Exemplary kindness

"It is with great appreciation that I write this letter expressing our gratitude to you and Gulf States Utilities," writes Garry W. Mann, pastor, Big Lake Gospel Tabernacle, Lake Charles, to **Dudley Clarke**, general line supervisor, Lake Charles.

"The kindness demonstrated toward us in aiding our effort to set a steeple on our church building is exemplary of that which makes the world a better place to live. It is so refreshing to know that there are companies who do not regard financial remuneration as the only reward worth pursuing. I and everyone at Big Lake Gospel Tabernacle wish to thank you and GSU for the generous contribution of time, manpower and equipment made toward this special project.

"I also want to thank **Harry Henry**, **Scott White**, **Joe Soileau** and **Greg DeVall** for their professionalism and community spirit they displayed during the actual hands-on labor of setting the steeple in place. They are to be commended for their efforts and should be regarded by Gulf States as genuine assets to the company. I want to extend special thanks to Greg DeVall for his efforts in bringing this to your attention and thereby making it possible to receive your help.

"Mr. Clarke, every time I see this steeple I rejoice for it is more than a steeple, it is a beacon of hope and a symbol of victory to the praise and glory of our God. It will always be remembered that you and Gulf States Utilities helped make it possible."

Henry is utility foreman-line; White is lineman-1st class; Soileau is lineman-1st class and DeVall is serviceman-1st class. All are located in Lake Charles.





# Memo to Illinois Communists: Beware of Don (er, Dan) Gray

by Kim McMurray

If you don't know what RFI stands for, consider yourself lucky and read on.

If you do know, you may be too busy to be reading this.

RFI is an acronym I'll spell out later on. Some people call them data requests. Lots of people at GSU sometimes call them names that can't be repeated in a family magazine.

When a utility company asks a regulatory body for permission to do something, the company must be prepared to provide additional information to support its request.

Various parties have a chance to participate in these cases and to ask the company for all kinds of back-up data. Responding to these RFIs can be tedious, costly, time-consuming and often frustrating. There are time limits for providing the requested information and penalties can be imposed if deadlines are missed.

(If, at this point, you're wondering what the heck this has to do with Communists from Illinois, be patient. We're getting there.)

Whenever GSU has a case pending at the Texas or Louisiana commissions, you can come to Edison Plaza just about any hour of the night or weekend and often find someone working to meet an RFI deadline.

Some years back, Ebenezer Scrooge was an intervenor. Not in name, but in spirit. One intervenor group, undoubtedly very aware of the season, sent us a bunch of RFIs two days before Christmas. Employees had to give up some of their holidays because the responses had to be submitted within four days.

Nowadays, if you say "Good morning" to someone from Rates and Regulatory Affairs, Fuel Services, Accounting, Legal Services, River Bend or Strategic Planning, don't take it personally if they growl at you. It may be because they're buried in RFIs related to our Texas fuel reconciliation case.

Once again, our intervenor friends are helping GSU make regulatory history. A fuel case isn't a rate case; it certainly shouldn't be as involved or costly as a full-blown rate case. But, for various reasons, it's not turning out that way. (If I start discussing the reasons now, we'll never find out about the Illinois Commies.)

The bottom line is that, as of mid-April, the company had already received more than 1,100 requests for various kinds of information and, in responding to about three-fourths of them, have provided some 52,000 pages of documentation. (In our last big rate case, which included River Bend prudence, we received "only" about 3,300 data requests.)

The intervening groups can ask just about anything (and usually do.) The company can object to the request for specific reasons, but we still end up providing massive amounts of information.

Overly broad RFIs can be challenged. Some of the questions remind me of the old story about the extra-tough history teacher whose test question was: "Many people perished in World War II. Name them."

In conjunction with the Texas fuel case, the company

recently received two very intriguing questions from attorneys representing a group of cities (including Beaumont, Port Arthur and others). Here are the requests as they were received:

QUESTION NUMBER CITIES-04-018

ASSIGN TO DOWIES/GRAY

PREPARED BY: NAME/TITLE

SPONSORED BY: HARRINGTON

4-18 Provide a copy of Don Gray's speech referenced in GSU's Annual Report entitled "Keeping the Communists Out of Illinois." (Doc #10894 15453)

QUESTION NUMBER CITIES-04-019

ASSIGN TO DOWIE/GRAY

PREPARED BY: NAME/TITLE

SPONSORED BY: HARRINGTON

4-19 If a copy of Mr. Gray's speech "Keeping the Communists Out of Illinois" is not available, describe the substance of the speech and its relationship to rail transportation of GSU fuel.

The key to this mystery is the document cited in parenthesis at the end of question 4-18. That indicates the request is a follow-up to a response provided earlier. If you look back at that document, you quickly realize there were problems with Questions 4-18 and 4-19. The document that precipitated the question was the outline of a fuels presentation made to a 1989 officers' meeting by Bill Harrington, GSU's manager of fuel services, and his staff. Dan Gray, administrator of fuel transportation, was not present because he was in Illinois for Air Force Reserve training. In a light-hearted reference to Gray's absence, Harrington's presentation included the line: "Dan Gray: Keeping the Communists Out of Illinois."

So, let's dissect Questions 4-18 and 4-19:

- The "Don Gray" is actually Dan Gray.
  - There was no speech.
  - "Keeping the Communists Out of Illinois" wasn't the title of anything.
  - The annual report wasn't involved in any way.
- Other than that, they were excellent questions.

There was talk of objecting to the questions for national security reasons, but tongues were planted firmly in cheeks at the time.

Many of the people who devote countless hours to answering RFI's wonder if all the materials they prepare ever get looked at. This episode shows some of it is being read (although not too closely).

This incident also provides a classic example of how the regulatory process often gets bogged down in time-consuming and expensive trivial pursuits.

Back to the acronym: RFI stands for Request For Information.

You may have thought it meant Ready For Irrelevance.



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*Work animals have played an important part in GSU's past. Mules pulled ice wagons in Lake Charles extensively, but were phased out with the onset of automotive technology. Recently, Western Division reverted back to mules to patrol hard to access rights-of-way. For more information, see pages 6-7.*



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